

Community Colleges to partner in the effort and provide advance-skill training

Brentwood, NY— Today, Congressman Steve Israel (D-Huntington) visited Suffolk Community College's Brentwood manufacturing lab to announce new legislation to match Post-9/11 veterans and GI Bill recipients with community colleges for training and then connect them with companies in need of their skills for local apprenticeships and jobs. The unemployment rate for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan is 13.1 percent—significantly higher than the national average. At the same time, manufacturing companies nationally need to fill roughly 600,000 vacancies, according to a recent Manufacturing Institute and Deloitte report.

Rep. Israel said, "This is a win-win solution that will provide returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan, who face one of the highest unemployment rates nationwide, with a unique skill set that will lead to jobs or apprenticeships while also providing manufacturing companies with the highly-skilled employees they need to stay competitive. Community colleges, like Suffolk, have been instrumental partners when it comes to providing training and career advancement to our returning veterans. I look forward to working with them on this program."

Suffolk Community College President Dr. Shaun L. McKay said, "We are eager to provide our returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with specialized training so they can help fill vacancies in local manufacturing companies. I can't think of a better way to use our resources than to train those who have given so much for our country so they can find good jobs."

The Revamping the Education of our Veterans to Align Manufacturing through Partnerships with Community Colleges (REVAMP Act) would include a skills gap analysis to determine what needs and jobs local manufacturing companies have been unable to meet. Community colleges would develop curricula and conduct targeted skills training to fill the gaps. Working with the local VA and the Department of Defense, community colleges would target Iraq- and Afghanistan-era veterans in the region for certificate or degree programs ranging from 24 weeks to two years in the manufacturing sector identified in the skills gap analysis. At the completion of the training program, community colleges would connect vets with companies in need of their skills.

Post-9/11 veterans who received an honorable discharge can use their GI Bill benefits, which provide financial support for education, to pay for the training. Companies that hire the veterans

may also be eligible to receive a tax credit Returning Heroes Tax Credit and the Wounded Warriors Tax Credit program, which was signed into law this past November to encourage companies to hire veterans.